



Autologous Blood

Your blood for your operation



What is autologous blood?

Patients undergoing surgery will sometimes require a blood transfusion to replace blood lost during surgery. When a surgical procedure is planned several weeks in advance, patients can become their own blood donor by having blood drawn ahead of time and receiving it back during or after their surgery. This is called 'Autologous Transfusion'.

Autologous blood is not 100% safe. It carries some of the same risks of allogeneic blood. However, autologous blood may reduce the risks of transfusion-transmitted disease and also the possibility of reaction caused by antibodies.

Note: Bacterial contamination during collection may equally affect any type of transfusions, as can storage or clerical error.

Who can donate?

In general, people who are:

- Between the ages of 16-74
- In reasonable health
- Not anaemic, and
- For whom there is a reasonable expectation of the need for transfusion

can be considered for autologous blood donation(s) prior to elective surgery.

All candidates are reviewed by a medical officer prior to their first collection to assess their suitability for the procedure.

How is a donation arranged?

Your doctor will need to refer you to Clinpath Laboratories. Once you have a completed request form from your doctor, you can make an appointment on 8366 2049.

Will the donation affect my health?

Immediately after donating blood, your haemoglobin level will be reduced. However, your bone marrow is stimulated to replace blood cells and the haemoglobin level is usually restored within a week or ten days. However, after repeated donations, you may become iron deficient. It is important to have a diet rich in iron during this time. The assessing doctor will discuss the option of taking iron tablets. Your haemoglobin level is checked prior to each donation and blood will only be collected if the haemoglobin level is satisfactory.

Will my blood be tested for diseases?

It is a legal requirement that, for each donation, tests are performed for hepatitis, HIV virus, HTLV-1 and syphilis - as these can be transmitted by blood transfusion. Any positive results for these infectious agents will prohibit use of these units, and your doctor will be notified.

Will autologous donations meet all my transfusion needs?

The autologous units you donate will be stored at Clinpath in readiness for your surgery.

However, it is possible that you will need more blood than the autologous units you donated and/or blood components other than whole blood or packed cells, such as plasma or platelets, are also sometimes used. When additional units are needed, they will be obtained from the community blood supply (Australian Red Cross Blood Service), and these, of course, are carefully screened and extensively tested before being issued.

When should I begin my donations?

Blood donation schedules are tailored to meet your needs and depend on the number of units to be collected. Donations may be started up to 35 days before your scheduled surgery and are usually collected once a week. You may not donate less than 72 hours before surgery.

How long does the collection process take?

The actual collection of the blood takes 7–15 minutes. However, your first visit may take up to 1 hour to complete a medical assessment and prepare the unique labels necessary to ensure proper identification of your blood unit. Subsequent visits will take approximately 30 minutes.

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What problems may occur with collection?

In general, the risks are minimal:

- Light headedness
- Discomfort or bruising around the needle site
- Minimal bleeding from the needle site (addressed by applying pressure and elevating the arm)

Avoid strenuous exercise or weight lifting using that arm.

How do I know I will receive my own blood?

Clinpath has developed a unique system of identification and tagging of the units with your name and your signature so you can feel secure you are receiving the blood you donated.

What do I do if my surgery is postponed?

You must notify us as soon as possible if your surgery is brought forward, postponed, rescheduled or cancelled. The direct telephone number is 8366 2049. If we are not kept informed, your blood may expire unnecessarily or not be available when you need it.

What happens to the blood if I don't need it?

Autologous units are not intended for other patients and will be destroyed after they expire.



Special instructions for the day of donation

- Before your donation, eat a good meal and drink plenty of fluids.
- Continue taking your medications as instructed by your doctor.
- Most people feel well enough to drive home after donating blood, however you may want to ask someone to drive you for the first donation.

Is there a fee for this service?

Currently, the entire process, including the medical assessment, blood collection, testing and storage of units is bulk-billed.



If you have any queries regarding the instructions, please do not hesitate to contact Dr Michael Speedy on 8366 2087.

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